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The Call *of* California

And Other Poems *of the* West

Francis Borton

THE CALL OF CALIFORNIA

And Other Poems
of the West

By
FRANCIS BORTON

FOURTH EDITION
Revised and Enlarged

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To Helen

THE CALL OF CALIFORNIA

HE CALL OF CALIFORNIA

And Other Poems of the West

By
FRANCIS BORTON

The Call of California

I HAVE wandered far away,
Many a long and weary day,
Through the scenes of which I dreamed in days of yore;
But I've turned at last to rest
In the land I love the best,
And it's California now,—forevermore,
On the margin of her shining, golden shore,
In the land of birds and blossoms,—evermore.

CHORUS

Oh! my California land,
Here I pledge my heart and hand,
For I love but you forever, love you true;
With the roses in your hair
And your lark-songs ev'ry where,
Underneath your dreamy skies of cloudless blue.

From your Missions, old and gray,
At the crimson close of day
I can hear the bells a-ringing, soft and low;
While the gay guitar of Spain
Lends a plaintive, sweet refrain
From the dim, romantic days of long ago,—
Long ago, long ago, long ago,
From the Padres and the Dons of long ago.

From Sierras, thunder-riven,
Shadowy peaks arise to heaven—
Hooded saints, whose names are benedicite;
From the cañon's purple rim
Downward rolls their matin hymn
Over golden-fruited valleys to the sea;
To the murm'ring pines beside the shining sea,
Till it mingles with the music of the sea.

In this sunny land of mine,
With its honey, oil and wine,
And its poppy fields aflame with living gold;
In this Eden of the earth
God is bringing to the birth
Greater wonders than He wrought in days of old;
In the bold days of old, the days of gold,
Than He fashioned through the Argonauts of old.

We have wealth upon the seas,
Health in every fragrant breeze,
  Rivers bursting from the mountain's
    cloven crest;
We have leagues of yellow grain—
Many a cattle-covered plain
  In this orange-blossom kingdom of the
    West,—
    In the free, unfettered, giant-hearted
      West,—
  'Neath the blue and golden banner of the
    West.

And it's where I want to be,
California's calling me
  Here to stay forever, never more to roam;
Calling me to come and rest
On her glowing, tawny breast,
  When her fields of bloom are like the
    billow's foam;
  Where the silv'ry olives whisper–welcome
    home;
  While along the hills the doves are call-
    ing—home.

At the Old Mission

THERE'S a sober hush in these solemn woods,
There's mystery in the air,
That seems to pour from the caves of death;
You can feel it everywhere.

A clear stream brawls through the piney dell,
Where the dove mourns all the day:
And the breeze dies down to a whisper here—
Where Padres used to pray.

The waters gush from the broken fount,—
But sadly, quietly now;
For gone are the monks who led them forth,—
The turf is green o'er their brow.

The lizard slides on the tottering walls,
That were once so brave and strong;
While the very birds, 'round these ruins gray,
Raise but a plaintive song.

The cells where brown Franciscans dwelt
Are ceiled with dank, dark moss;
So deeply the tooth of Time hath gone
We can scarcely find a cross!

The cross, the name and the date grow dim,
Only the faith remains:
The monk departs, but his faith endures
Through the years with their beating rains.

Seventeen hundred and something I find
In a cell half buried by leaves:—
A pine tree shoots from the knee-worn stones,
And you'd almost say it grieves!

The new must prevail—the old give place—
And yet—oh heart of mine—
There is something that speaks to me out of the Past,
When I stand at this ruined shrine,

That stirs my heart to its uttermost depths,
But the reason I do not know,
When I muse on these symbols of faith and love
From the years of long ago.

Here were gardens of flowers from far-off Spain,
The olive, the palm and the vine;
Where bees and butterflies find today
But sunlight's golden wine;

Here bells that clashed in the old gray towers;
And voices of prayer and praise;
Where brown hands wrought in glad content
In those dim, forgotten days.

All this—and more—that may never return,
While the tides march up and down;—
The cowl and the cord, and the sandal shoon
And the Padres' robes of brown.

But ever the best of it all shall bide,
While rains slant in from the sea;
The gentleness, kindness and patient faith
Live yet for you and me.

And long as the mercy of God shall pour
Our sea-fogs from His hands,
Will dreams and deeds of the "Mission days"
Be part of the lore of these lands.

Junipero Serra

WHEN weaklings feared and doubted,
While unfaith scoffed and flouted,
Thou still didst trust,
And in the dust,
Prone on thy face, didst pray,
Till, lo! the sudden ray
Of hope,—and ev'ry lip,
Rejoicing cried: "The ship!"
Deep in eternal granite be it graved
How, in that hour, was California saved.

✠ ✠ ✠

Junipero Serra sleeps today
By the mission walls at Carmel Bay;
His task well done, he takes his rest,
With thin hands crossed on his saintly breast:
While brown hills welcome the winter rains,
Or lark songs ripple o'er poppied plains;—
His dreams and deeds in the days of old
Are part of the lore of our land of gold.

The West

ALONG our blue Sierra's wall,
No moldering castles rest;
But there the Redman's Thunder-bird
Hath built his lonely nest.

No hoary donjons, foul with crime,
Oppress the good, clean sod
Where live-oaks meet, with knotted arms,
The blazing bolts of God.

Instead of doubtful titles stamped
On pride's dim vellumed page,
The sullen grizzly here hath left
The claw marks of his rage.

No silken halls, no softness here,
No courtiers, false as hell;
But from the echoing granite gorge
The panther's deadly yell!

Here, laws unflattering, primal, harsh;
The desert's scorching breath;
Here, thorn, fang, claw and scalping knife–
The crimson trail of death!

And what are man-made kings and courts,
With cheap, brief honors set,
Where, in the red, raw clay of things,
God's thumb-prints yet are wet?

* * *

Amid these awful solitudes,
With skies so still and blue,
Are held such deadly, fierce debates
As minstrels never knew.

Here howling winds of ocean meet
The wild winds of the sky,
While vast, dim shapes from desert wastes
Their spirals wheel on high.

Cliff calls to cliff; th' avalanche
Replies in thunders loud,
While shafts of blinding lightning split
The swirling, inky cloud,

That bursts, and ploughs the mountains down,
The salt plain's hissing sands,
Till fresh-torn cañon gulfs reveal
Earth's granite swaddling bands!

* * *

And here are men, sons of thy strength,
Oh, western land of mine,
Gay, tender, careless, swift and wild,
But upright as the pine.

Serene, clear-eyed, of Spartan speech,
The breed of men out here,
Who've trailed with hunger, thirst and death,
But never met with fear.

The wide, free winds are in their hearts,
The deep-voiced torrent's roar,

The solemn stillness of the woods,
  Beside the lonely shore.

They need no finger-posts for faith;
  No self-sure go-between;
They look God in the face and smile;
  Their rugged hearts are clean.

They pluck the gray wolf from his den;
  They tire the grizzly down,
Or peacefully their harvests reap
  Along the foothills brown.

They beat the mountain into dust;
  They burst its ribs apart;
Their laughter rings Homeric when
  They clutch its golden heart!

Alone they win the chill, still heights,
  By mountain sheep untrod;
They gaze abroad, they bare their brows
  And shout, "Hurrah for God!"

Oh, little folk, who cringe and hedge,
  Who cannot understand,
They tread a broader trail than yours
  Across our Sunset Land,

Where man is kin to peak and star,
  The wide plain's lonely space;
Where oft they ride so close to God
  They meet Him—face to face!

Mt. Rubidoux at Dawn

THE mocking birds are singing in the eucalyptus tops,
It's early in the morning, and the fog is everywhere;
The sounds of nature's wakening come to us tunefully
All softly muffled by the misty air.

The "cotton tails" are hopping in the barley by the road;
Behind a bush the clucking quail are bunched—about to fly;
The liquid, melting melody of joyous meadow larks
Like silvery bubbles floats along the sky.
The "ragged robin" roses spill their nectar on the grass
Before the robber bees, who love the sun, are out of bed:
While drowsy poppies wait to pour libations to their lord,
When in the East he rears his radiant head.

The shimmering, emerald laces of the queenly pepper tree
Are strewn with dewy pearls and fringed with flakes of scarlet flame;
While the orange, dark and lustrous, in her robes of green and gold,
Hath sent through all the earth this valley's name.

The golden-dusted mustard pours its fragrance down the hill.
To where, in marshy tule beds, the noisy blackbirds throng:
The jangle of the cattle bells comes faintly from below
Where the lazy Santa Ana rolls along.

How sweet the button-sage's breath upon the quiet air;
How fresh and clean the odor from the haunting, whispering pines:
While, spread in wild profusion, where the gray old boulders cling,
The splendor of the morning-glory vines!

But now the fog is ebbing fast along Jurupa's hills,
As over San Jacinto gleam the banners of the sun:
Far up on foot-worn Rubidoux a shining cross appears,
The symbol that the earth's long night is done.

The Mission Inn

WITH its ivied walls and its cloistered halls
And a coolness and quietness all its own;
From its shady bowers to its tuneful towers
It's a fair dream fashioned in good gray stone;
With a high ideal everywhere,
With a fineness of sentiment in the air,
And music—that soothes like the soul of prayer.

There's bread and meat—for a man must eat—
But there's more than that to make one whole:
The builder's dream had a broader theme
In this caravansarai for the soul.
"*Sursum corda,*" we seem to hear
From good St. Francis, standing near,
"Lift up your hearts, and make good cheer."

The saints are gone, yet they still live on;
Still is their gentle influence felt;
From niche and nook they kindly look,
As when Junipero Serra knelt
And told to Indians swart and wild
The wondrous tale of the dear Christ-child—
And the love of Mary, the mother mild.

When the day grows dim, and the vesper hymn

So tunefully sounds in the silvery chimes,
I seem to hear—far away and clear—
Voices that speak from the olden times:
Of sacrifice, better than gold or fame,
Of love that burned like a fragrant flame—
Till my selfish heart is faint for shame.

Not for me alone is this sermon in stone,
Nor only to me do these mute things speak:
Full many a heart has received its part,
The quiet tear glistened on many a cheek;
Many a pilgrim has paused to say:
"I'm glad my heart ever found the way
To the Mission Inn at the close of day."

Down the Grade with "Bob"

(1874)

WE'VE topped the grade, now for the other side;
Sling the buckskin in 'em—let 'er slide.

We're full of 'Frisco folks and tenderfeet
That wants some early stagin'—here's their treat.

Straighten them tugs—don't let 'em drag the dust—
Hi there! you trottin' pinto, lope er bust.

A bunch of broncs, and hellions every one—
Hoop-la, git out—fergit yer shoulder's skun.

Oh we're all right: my lady, dry yer tears,
Sit down, my lord, and chase away yer fears;

The road is twelve feet wide from bluff to ledge
With manzaniller strung along the edge.

Why, man alive, a Chinymun at night
Could strike the trail here—why it's out o' sight!

Git out o' here—you leaders, switch yer tails,
Yer haulin' Uncle Sammy's sacred mails;

Stretch them there traces, limber up yer heels,
No moseyin' er I'll show you how it feels.

No bitin' now—you lop-eared antelope—
You old kyoty—bust it down the slope;

Jump through them collars—hump yer backs 'n git—
You haven't turned a hair—now chaw the bit.

Thanks, stranger, yes,—I surely guess I could
Smoke a cigar–gimme a light–that's good;

There haint no tin-foil cabbage leaves to that—
A Mexican cigar—I'll bet my hat!

You see, I used tuh run 'em through, you know
Over the Rio Grande from Mexico,

Some years before that old wheel plug was born—
But here's our hangout—Gabriel toot yer horn;

Grubstake Junction, where they'll treat you white,
The bar-room's blazin'—strangers, will you light?

The Road by Panama

THE old road, the gold road, the road by Panama,
As lurid, ghastly as the path that Dante dimly saw,
Hemmed about by nameless terrors, haunted by alarms,—
The ghosts of treasure-seekers spent, of spectral men-at-arms.
A narrow way and rugged, wild, where jungle shadows spread
O'er many a bubbling, slimy pool and hideous blotch of red.
Amid its ooze the rotting bones of famished Spanish mules,
The grinning skulls of picaroons and fortune's cheated fools.
The venomed snake, the vulture keen, the deadly fly are there,
And fetid heaps whose breath is death upon the sickly air.

* * *

Along the hot, dark forest aisles again we seem to hear
The rush of feet, the clash of blades, the hoarse-voiced buccaneer,
The whistle of the slaver's whip, the screams of tortured men,
Who sink beneath the bloody lash to never rise again;
The silver-laden, grunting mules, with plunder from Peru,

The shouts of conquering Cortez' men, of
Drake and Morgan's crew;
Pizarro's Spaniards, haggard, weak, with
fear in every eye,
Who may not stay nor sleep for ever "on-
ward" is the cry;
Who fear the gloom where glows the
hounded Indian's sleepless hate,
Where mutilated galley-slaves like panthers
lie in wait;—
And so full oft they cross themselves, to
stout San Yago pray,
As on they urge with curses foul through
the hot, weary way,
Hugging tight their hard-won spoils and
fainting with desire
To tread the streets of Panama and lap its
liquid fire;
Where painted harpies watch for them, with
baleful eyes and bold,
To strip them clean with iron claws and
leave them stark and cold.

* * *

Oh! the old road, the gold road, the road by
Panama,
A rosary of every crime, where lawlessness
was law,
Where harvestings of piracies on sea and
land went by,—
Thrice cursed treasure black with groans
and ravished women's cry;
The minted sweat and blood of branded,
scarred, Peruvian slaves,

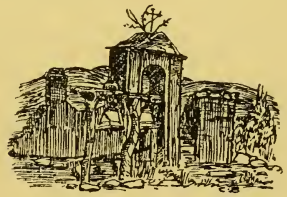
The riflings of their temples, yea, the winnowings of their graves!

* * *

And later, by this wild highway, with dauntless hearts aflame,
The boisterous, bearded Argonauts from California came;
In motley rags with belts and bags of unstained virgin ore
Stripped from the shining, granite ribs of Eldorado's shore!

* * *

Aye, many a golden trickle ran, through many a fearful year
To swell the rich Pactolus tide of this Hell's gullet here.
But all is hushed and quiet now: they passed and left no trace,
And in the solemn forest shade no eye may mark their place.
They dreamed their dream, they wrought their deed of valor or of shame,
To share alike, some few brief years, an infamy of fame!



Mexico

SHE is circled with lakes, she is shadowed by mountains,
Snow-mantled, pine-plumed, under-girded with flame;
She is young, she is old as her sister of Egypt,
She is ever, forever, yet never the same.

Fresh is her cheek as her green curving valleys,
Care free her heart as her brown babes at rest;
Bright are her hopes as the eyes of her daughters,
Her passion as fierce as her storms from the West.

Her story as sad as the gloom of her "northers,"
Her struggle as epic as ever was told;
Her heroes are laureled in valor's Valhalla,
With coronals woven of nopal and gold.

Oh, Mexico! heiress of cycles of sorrow,
Of jungle-grown hieroglyphs, meaningless now,
Of histories, cities, dumb, buried forever,
Of mysteries dark as the runes on thy brow.

Glorious with rare carven gems from the ages,
Waiting the wonderful years yet to be,
Clasping thy brown hand we hail thee, our sister,
Thou queen, silver throned by thine opalesque sea.

The Land of the Arriero

WHERE valleys are deep and mountains are high
And the mule-track hangs like a streak in the sky,—
Like a vulture's path through the thin, still air
Far over the "hot lands," shimmering there;
Where afar and faintly the music swells
Of quick-stepping, grey mules' silvery bells;
Where pine trees yield to the pine-apple's gold
And billows of bloom o'er the earth are rolled;
Where the trees drip honey, the sod sweats death
And sucks out your life with its vampire breath;
Where the warm, green heart of that lotus land
Gives all with a care-free, generous hand,—
'Tis there that the gay arriero's found,
Where he takes his ease on his own home ground.

Where cataracts thunder, the parrots scream,
And gorgeous, wonderful butterflies gleam,
While marvelous birds in their glowing wings
Wear the royal splendors of Aztec kings;
Where the wild orange drops its acrid fruit
Near the strangled, writhing *ceiba's* root;
Where the hiss is heard of the spotted snake

As iguanas slide through the bamboo brake;
Where the tapir crunches the river reeds
And the jaguar leaps as the red deer feeds;
And the *cayman* basks on the sun-baked bar,
While life, as you knew it, seems dim and far;—
From there do the swart arrieros come,—
To those mystical beauties blind and dumb.

They laden their mules with rich, fragrant freights:
Coffee, vanilla, fruits, parrots in crates,
Sugar, tobacco, raw liquor in casks,
A mouthful of which arriero asks
To lighten his heart up the steep, rough road,
'Neath the scorching sun and the heavy load.

Lithe as a *tigre* and tireless of limb,
Clean moulded in bronze, ev'ry inch of him,
Son of the sunland, gay, careless and wild,
Aztec, fierce, passionate, nature's own child,
His thirty stout mules upward grunting go
Over the narrow trail, steady and slow;
Snuffing the pathway that clings to the edge
Of the sheer down-dropping, slippery ledge;
The trail that was known to Cortez of old
Who dreamed of dim valleys paven with gold,
While crushing the land 'neath his iron-shod heel
When the red years rang to the clash of steel!

How silvery sweet ring the mule-bells there,
When the dew yet freshens the morning air!

How merrily sound the songs of the South,
As carelessly flung from the muleteer's mouth:
Songs of the soil, of the heart, of the sun,
Of *dulce amor* or *partida* won,
With many a sighing and *ay de mi*,
In the high-pitched, Mexican nasal key!

He's a good *paisano*, I know him well,
He hopes there's a heaven, is sure there's a hell,
Trusts in the *padre*, remembers to pray
To the blessed saints in his own blind way,
And slaves for his *amo* for scanty pay.
He climbs the wild mountains in sun or shower
And cares for his mules in the darkest hour;
His * *amo* would grieve for an injured mule,
As for him, why, he is only a fool,
Like a simple hero of low degree
He dies for his charge if need there be
And returns to his palm-thatched hut no more
Where his brown babes roll on the cool, dirt floor.

* "Amo," boss.

A Thunder Storm in Puebla

FROM morning prayer until mid-afternoon
The August sun has scorched us to a swoon;
The languid flowers droop, the pepper trees
Respond but feebly to the faint, hot breeze.

The brown hills are a quiver with the heat:
Hugging the scanty shade of every street
The dogs slink by too spent to scratch or bark;
Awhile the beggars cease their whine, when hark,—
Down from the mountain rolls a long, deep roar
And wise "Poblanos" shut and bar the door.

In thrice three credos old Malinche's brow
Is swirled in ebon darkness, where but now
The southern sun poured down a flood of gold
O'er shattered crag and wrinkled lava fold.

With tropic fierceness falls th' onrushing gloom,
Swiftly the bright day yields its virgin bloom
To the marauder, thunder-browed, whose power
Swells black to heav'n in this tempestuous hour.
Now latch the shutters, chain the heavy door,
Call to the Virgin, all the saints implore

As shouting winds and lightning's crooked
prong
Urge the slow-footed, bellowing clouds along.

Jesús, Maria, hearken to the rain
Flooding the patio while on every pane
The hailstones beat the very fiend's tatoo,
And every dust-clogged water-spout a-spew!
Most Blessed Virgin, we confess our faults,
(Maria, vida mia, bring my salts),
Where is Francisco, lazy lout, to burn
The blessed palm leaves in the incense urn?

No time for chatter now, nor idle talk,
When sulphur-breathing demons near us
walk,
"Sweet Guadalupe, help us all today,
To thee we *pobres pecadores* pray."

Then suddenly, in one long, furious blast,
Of lightning, thunder, hail, the storm has
passed.
The sun appears, and in the western skies
The rainbow path that slopes to Paradise!

Gone are the dolour, darkness, and the gloom,
Gone every thought of an unwelcome tomb:
Vaya, mi alma, now the storm is o'er,
Bid the *portero* haste, unbar the door,
Blow out the candles, we shall not be late,
The *tandas* won't begin till half-past eight.

Taking the Veil (Mexico)

WITH unbound hair and brown feet bare,
A taper in her hands,
Within the gloomy convent church
A dark-eyed maiden stands,

All corpse-like in a clinging shroud,
A cross upon her breast,—
The hour hath come to bid farewell
To all she loveth best.

Her virgin heart is dry as dust,
Her face is like the dead;
The church hath laid its withering touch
Upon her fair young head.

Her thin hand wears a golden band,—
The mystic wedding ring
That seals her as the spouse of Christ,
Her Lover, Bridegroom, King.

The air is heavy, damp and cold,
The candles dimly gleam
While priests about the altar go
Like figures in a dream.

They chant the service for the dead,
For her so wan and still,
With *Kyrie eleison*
From boyish voices shrill.

O! hapless maid, deceived, betrayed,
The victim of a vow,

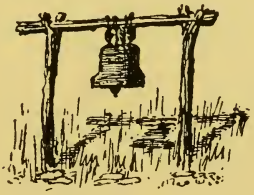
To wither in a living death,
  Like Jephtha's daughter now!

No lover's kiss, no mother's bliss
  Her frozen heart may know,
Within the convent's coffin walls
  Through years of dumb-lipped woe.

No more on earth may she behold
  Each well-beloved face;
No more the circle of the home
  Shall hold for her a place;

All, all, upon the altar there
  Hath now been sacrificed,
And so farewell to life and love,
  Farewell, thou bride of Christ.

One last wild look at love and life,
  One shriek,—and that is all,
A doleful bell rings like a knell,
  The sable curtains fall.



Old House in Puebla, Mexico

THREE hundred years are in these walls,
These iron-bound doors of oak,
Whose rugged strength has oft withstood
Sir Robber's shrewdest stroke.

The knocker wears a demon's head,—
Jesu, and well-away;
A goatish devil, bearded, horned,
Let him who knocketh pray

To where above, in battered niche,
The good St. Francis stands,
Marked Christwise in his blessed feet
And in his loving hands.

The Moorish front is gay with tiles
Of yellow, green and blue,
Inwrought in cunning, quaint designs
As ancient craftsmen knew.

Rude gargoyles grin from jutting eaves,
A spout of hammered lead
Shoots the flat roof's flood to the street
Through gaping lion's head.

Above the door an ancient crest,
Carved in the old grey stone:—
A tiger couched, a helmet barred,
A fist that grips its own!

They say the house is haunted, cursed,
And show a bloody stain

Linked with a tale of love and gold
From the old Spanish Main.

Great spiders lurk in corners dim,
Foul bats breed in the wall;
At night, when worm-gnawed timbers creak,
Faint whispers fill the hall,

From lips of dust, from love betrayed,
From woman's vengeful heart,
Whose clinging curse from these old stones
May nevermore depart.

A Mexican Beggar

BECAUSE he was so old, deformed and poor,
Because he bent so meekly his hoar head,
Because he bore the dignity of sorrow
As some king begging in a beggar's guise,
Because he was so thankful for the trifle
Carelessly tossed him from my surplus store:—
Because of his bare feet and tattered rags—
His thin grey locks and utter misery,
I rested but uneasily that night,
Dreaming of Dives, Lazarus and their lesson,
Of creed and church, of apostolic faith,
Of orthodox confessions and professions—
Strange a street beggar should disturb me so!

A Glimpse of Mexico at Home

THE windows frown with heavy bars of iron;
The great *zaguan* is like some castle door,
Spiked, bolted, chained and solid as the wall,
With quaint bronze knocker o'er the wicket hung.

For there were times, whose mem'ry still is fresh,
When great need was of such stout doors as these,—
When bold Sir Robber, loud-voiced, sword in hand,
Knocked not so gently as we knock today.

Three centuries are seen in this *zaguan*
Of evolution, liberty and law;
And twenty centuries are in the cry
Of the *portero*, fumbling at the bar,
Who calls *quien es?* before he slips the chain,
As porters in the dim days of the Christ.

Yo Soy, we cry,—the old man hears and knows
The accents of his *patron's* welcome voice.
Drops the huge chain, slides back the bar, and we
Are in the *patio* of a Mexic home!

Coolness and rest; a fountain in the midst,
Decked with quaint carvings, murmurs drowsily;
The solid, whitened arches all about,
Have brought us to the ancient Moorish Spain,
Shutting us from the modern world outside,
Into the home life of Cid Campeador!

Flowers ev'rywhere, in Talavera pots,
In shattered *ollas*, broken sugar moulds,
While orchids, cactus, bloom in great ox horns
Hung from rude spikes thrust in the old stone wall.

Chatter of women 'round the plashing fount,
Brown, shirtless *ninos* creeping in the sun;
And over all, laughter and glad content,—
Happy, though poor, these simple Mexicans.

Within the house we find the constant lamp
Of turnip oil before the Virgin placed,—
Sweet symbol of a faith that will not die;
Chromos of hell and heaven, angels, fiends,
The good man borne to glory, while foul devils
All hoofed and horned, bear the bold sinner hence,
To red hell shrieking,—all in vivid hues,—
No place for "higher criticism" there.

The almanac hangs open on the wall
To mark the saint's days of the mother church;

Rude charcoal burners from the pine-clad slopes
Of dark Malinche, farmers, artisans,
The rich and poor, all guard the "holy days,"
And even butchers close their reeking stalls.

You cannot know, you cannot understand
You careless tourist from the outside world,
You do not, cannot feel the inner life
That throbs in Mexico, the guide-books fail,
They may not give the "open sesame:—"

The patios where crystal fountains drip,
Where women gossip when the air is cool,
The courtesy, the kindness, filial love
That links the home hearts here in Mexico.

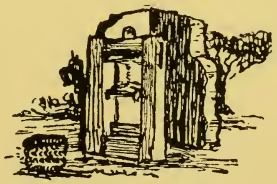
From polished hoop the parrot swings and screams
In fluent Spanish all the drowsy day;
The *lavanderas* swash their clothes near by
Where brown babes crawl, in naked comfort free,—
"Race suicide," a thing undreamed of here!

Compadres and *comadres*, wrinkled, grey,
Still use the customs of old Abram's time,
Poetic, patriarchal,—poured round all
The silver melody of Spanish speech!

Servants grown old in service of their friend,
Their lord and *amo*, master of their lives
Who serve for love and the sweet "niño's" sake,—
Faithful till death,—there are such servants here.

And over all this inner life of ours
In rippling waves, a heart-born laughter flows,
A simple happiness and sweet content.
How much there is that money cannot buy,
That may be found here in this ancient land;
Things the heart hungers for, the pearls of faith,
Strange, but you'll find them with these Mexicans;

But not for sale, nor saleable for such
Are the choice fruits of simple lives that hold
Fast to the principles our fathers knew,
When they were glad and grateful in their day
For rain and sunshine, harvest and a home,
And sweet babes growing heav'nward from the hearth,—
Yea, such things may be found in Mexico!



In the Days of the Buccaneers

WHERE Palo Verde broods above
The never quiet waves,
That burst in thunder far within
Her pearl-enameled caves,
Alone, upon the sea-birds' ledge
That overhangs the bay,
I watch the fleet of fishers creeping
Catalina way;
The lumber schooners warping in,
All redolent of pine,
The deep-sea freighters at their docks
Where donkey-engines whine;
I trace the sea-wall's shelt'ring arm
That holds the harbor light
To cheer the channel coasters through
The wild Southeaster's night,
And, while the shining steamers pass
Like shuttles to and fro,
Before my eyes there seem to rise
The days of long ago.
Seen through the veil of vanished years
How dim and far they seem,—
The treasure ship, the pirate's gold,—
A half remembered dream!

THE GALLEON

Beyond the bay, Manila bound,
I see the galleon go,
Deep laden with her silver spoil
From mines in Mexico.

Her fat hull lined with dye-woods, gums,
  Rude bales of wrinkled hides,
Pearls, ginseng, crimson cochineal
  And bezoar stones besides.

Athwart the high, embattled poop
  Her stately name unrolled,—
"La Trinidad Santisima,"
  In carven scrolls of gold.

Her culv'rins huge, of Moorish bronze,
  Each duly named and blessed,
Reveal th' armourer's utmost art,—
  On each the royal crest,

High overhead, with Cross blood-red,
  The banner of Castile,
While clad in shining Milan mail
  From haughty head to heel,

The blue-veined Don looks proudly down
  Along her castled walls,
Silent save when to ear-ringed men
  His silver trumpet calls.

The crew, right sturdy villains all,
  By dreams of plunder led;
Bound turban wise with gaudy scarves
  Each scarred, ferocious head.

While mingled with them friars grey,
  Who deem the world but dross,
So might they bear to heathen lands
  The mystery of the Cross.

With glorious eyes of Andaluz
  And rippling, ebon hair
A grieving daughter bends beside
  Her gray-beard father there

And stares as one distraught upon
  The cold and cruel sea,
Or breathes soft prayers to pitying saints
  With many an *ay de mi!*

Sweet Jesus, will she see once more
  Her sun-bright Spanish home
Beyond the fields of bitter brine,
  The weary leagues of foam?

Don Captain Vasco de Guzman,
  A valiant Spaniard he,
Who fears not any shape that haunts
  The vast, mysterious sea:

The hippocamp with leathern wings,
  The serpent-headed whale,
The fearful kraken, slimy, huge,
  With scales like brazen mail;

Whose writhing arms suck down the ships
  Swirled in an inky tide:—
The crested dragons spouting flame
  On whom the mermen ride:—

When sandaled pilgrims, whisp'ring tell
  Of such foul worms as these,
That rear aloft their hideous heads
  In strange, uncharted seas,

With swelling Spanish oaths the Don
  Will stun the doubting ear,—
How all such scurvy cattle he
  Has seen, but cannot fear;

Not them, nor all the roaring fiends
  Astride the tempest's blast:—
For why,—he hath a holy bone
  Safe bedded in the mast!

A gracious bone, most potent, rare,
  From good San Yago's shrine,—
That foul fiend's self dare not draw near
  Where that sweet bone doth shine!

Yet one there was whose dreaded name
  Could chill the Don with fear:—
Bill Hawkins, heretic accursed,
  The English buccaneer!

The picture shifts, the galleon's gone,
  Through mists of silver spray
And now the wolfish pirate ship
  Comes snuffing up the bay.

THE PIRATES

For long, long years the Silver Seas
  That name of terror knew,—
Bill Hawkins, monster, merciless,
  And his ferocious crew

Of crop-eared knaves, scarred galley slaves,
  And rogues with branded hands,
Gaol fruit to weight the gallows tree,—
  Swept up in many lands.

From Maracaibo to Peru,
  From Vera Cruz to Spain
Their crimson crimes unnameable
  Had left a bloody train,

Each scuttled ship a blazing tomb
  With ne'er a breath of life;—
One swift grim law for all,—the plank,
  Rope, pistol, pike or knife!

With wolfish eyes they share the prize,
  With many a murderous blow;—
The jolly Roger overhead,
  The ghastly decks below;

They broach the rum, the fiddlers come,
  Around and 'round they reel;
They've diced with Death, the game is theirs,
  With a dead man at the wheel!

And while their hellish revelry
  Affronts the quiet skies
They're off again for Port o' Spain
  And some fat galleon prize.

So grew their glittering, golden spoil
  But ah, the shrieks and tears,
The gurgling groans that blackened it
  Through wild, crime-crusted years;

That treasure wrung from bursting hearts,
  From pallid hands of woe,
By tortures sharp and exquisite
  As only devils know.

But when at last the lion's paw
  Upon Bill Hawkins fell
The bulk of their huge hoard was gone
  And where,—no man could tell.

In clanking chains they hung him high
  At Execution Dock.
Yet to the end he snapped and cursed,
  His heart like any rock.

He would not tell, nor ever told,
  He left no faintest clew,
No map nor scrap to guide the greed
  Of his rapacious crew,

Who searched in vain through all their haunts,
  On many a shining shore,
By cave and cliff, by tree and tower
  A twelve months' space or more.

By rum and riot some were slain,
  And some by foul disease,
Some rotted in the festering slime
  Of dungeons overseas;

Upon the rack some howled their last,
  Too few the gibbet bore;
To open sea the rest won free,
  And there an oath they swore,

To seek far off in Western seas
  Bill Hawkin's hidden lair
For black-faced Anak in a dream
  Had seen the treasure there!

Then Westward Ho! away they go,
  They cross the Silver Seas
Whose coral islands oft had known
  Their merry devilries.

On, on they sail till warm winds fail,
  They curse the ice and snow:
Again the black man dreams his dream,
  And onward aye they go.

Around the utmost icy cape
  They wrestle with the blast;
Then shift their sails to milder gales
  And trust the worst is past.

They sight Peru, "Spain's treasure chest,"—
  The land Pizarro won,
(It's jeweled temples paved with gold),
  From Incas of the sun.

Like grinning wolves that near the prey
  They urge the ship along;
The rum beside the mast all day,
  All night the rover's song.

Now clear and cold like silver spires
  The peaks of Mexico
Where Cortez found a Spanish cure
  For Montezuma's woe;

And found withal such shining pearls,
  Such emerald stones and gold,
That every pirate sucks his cheeks
  Whene'er the tale is told.

Through windless seas of sodden grass
  Most evilly they fare,
Till sails with rotting mold are green
  As any mermaid's hair,
Till Hawkins and his gold they curse
  And curse each other there.

Then California's golden shore
  With wondering joy they view,
The friendly Indian's flashing oar
  Beside his swift canoe;

The fair green hills whose silver rills
  Run singing to the sea
Through fragrant meadows bright with bloom
  And wild bird's minstrelsy.

His dream holds yet, the signs are met,
  Black Anak grins with glee;
Lo! on the right St. Peter's cove,
  St. Catharine on the lee.

Down come the sails, the anchor plumps,
  The rum goes gaily 'round,
Were never men more fain to see
  Their shadows on the ground!

With panting strokes they win the beach,
  Th' Ethiop leads the way:
Their hot breaths whistle at his back,
  His thick lips seem to pray.

Now here, now there, they search and swear,
  God, how they ramp and rave;
Have they been diddled by a dream,—
  Then Christ that black man save!

With frenzied hands they hurl the sands,
  Rocks, shells and vines apart,
In every eye the lust for gold,
  Murder in each foul heart.

At last their streaming toil unstops
  A huge, black yawning hole;
So murky, deep and deadly cold
  That fear grips every soul;

But not for long,—they strike a flint
  The spark leaps out and there
They eye the ghastly proofs that mark
  Bill Hawkin's secret lair!

A shattered skull, a rusted blade,
  A shapeless pile of bones,—
At which some spat and crossed themselves
  And spake in milder tones:

Then swore more foully, passed the rum,
  Thrust forth a torch and saw
What they had scourged the seas to gain
  And broken every law.

Deep sunken in the cavern's mold
  The smoking lights reveal
An ancient chest of Spanish oak
  With bands and bolts of steel;

Upon whose cover, red with rust,
  Some dim device is seen;
A Latin scrawl, a helmet plumed,
  With ramping beasts between;

At sight of which the gloomy vault
  Resounds with oaths and cheers,—
Forgotten then their scars and wounds
  Their hunger, cold and fears.

Leaps forth the dreamer Anak then
  With hoarse unhuman yell—
A tongueless eunuch huge and black,—
  Tusked like a fiend from Hell,

Heaves up a mighty bowlder there,
  Bursts oak and steel in twain
And lo! the long sought glittering hoard,
  Culled from the Spanish Main!

THE TREASURE

They do not dream, the torches gleam
  On gold and jewels there;
Such gems as high-born Spanish dames
  On cold, proud bosoms wear;

Sequins, pistoles, broad gold doubloons,
  Dull burnished silver bars,
Carbuncles, emeralds, diamonds bright
  That sparkle like the stars;

Pieces of eight, rich silver plate,
  Fair pearls like shining tears,
With many a dainty trinket torn
  From shrieking beauty's ears;

Brave rings with fingers in them yet,
  All fleshless, black and dried,—
A grisly harvest, cutlass reaped
  From blue-veined hands of pride;

Bejeweled blades of damascene
From Spain's dark, bloody sod
And great rose rubies, once the eyes
Of some tusked, snouted god;

Gilt crucifixes, candlesticks,
Basons of beaten gold
And chalices with diamond studs
Lapped in a cloudy fold
Of laces wrought by pallid nuns
In Spanish convents cold.

With furious haste such splendid spoil
They heap together there
Would buy thrones, virtues, souls of men,—
St. Peter's ivory chair!

Yet when each one his share surveys
It shows so mean and small,
In every envious heart is hatched
The will to win it all.

Greed shows its hissing, venomed head,
Bursts forth each ancient hate;
Not one can meet another's eye
Nor trust his trusted mate.

Like wolves they snarl, like foul fiends roar
Around that gloomy cave,
Nor hear the whistling wind without,
Nor heed the lapping wave.

Each tears his fellow's cursing throat
Each lunging blade is red;
Till 'round that mocking treasure lie
But dying men or dead.

In crimson pools that slowly creep
  Along the trampled mire
A little space the torches hiss
  Like serpents ringed with fire;

Then darkness seals each staring eye
  In that unhallowed grave,—
Their requiem but the wailing wind,
  The moaning of the wave.

Awhile the keen-eyed buzzard wheels
  Above the cavern's door,
And horny crabs slide in and out
  Across the fetid floor;

The gaunt coyote snuffing comes
  Then softly slinks away,
While slowly rots the pirate ship
  Upon the lonely bay.

The years slip by, then comes a day,
  Tense, boding, hot and still,
No sound is heard from beast or bird
  Along the hazy hill;

In whirls of dust the dry leaves dance
  Beside the listening shore,—
How shrunk with fear the sea-bird's cry,
  How loud the ocean's roar!

Then suddenly the wooded hills
  The earth's firm pillars rock
And shuddering peaks as in a fit
  Their knees together knock;

The ancient cliffs plunge in the deep,
A thousand thunders sound,—
Till where the sea-fowl fed her young
But boiling waves are found!

Gone is the pirate's cave, their gold
Is scattered far and wide
Along the careless ocean's floor
The sport of every tide.

Some little time their polished bones
Are strewn along the shore
Then from the memory of man
They pass for evermore.

Calvary

WHEN our dear Lord is deadly sorrow bound
Shed blood and water from his heart's deep wound,
A little lad stood, boy like in the shade—
By the rude Cross and Royal Victim made—
And whirled his toy around in thoughtless glee
Not knowing Him who bled for you and me:
A bird sprang twittering from the grassless sod
And perched upon the Tree that bore our God,
Singing its sweet song to the fading day
While Jesus' heart blood dripped full fast away.

Old Mexico

OLD Mexico of the long ago,
Land of the silver rills,
The vanished centuries linger yet
Amid thy foot-worn hills.

From thy snows and pines, thy dark, deep mines,
Down to thy tropic sea
There is never a thing a man might ask
That may not be found in thee!

Silver and gold in thy ridges rolled,
Health from thy snow-capped peaks,
Beautiful women with flashing eyes
And sun-kissed olive cheeks;

Culture that comes from the Spanish Moors
Of a thousand years ago;
And customs that come from the yellow East
But how—no man may know.

Faces as fair as ever were seen
In any rose gardens of earth;
And the slant-eyed, squat-nosed Mongol breed,—
What land first saw their birth?

Hieroglyphs older than Norsemen's runes,—
Palaces ancient as Tyre,
Where the smiling child of the sun today
Bakes his corn-cakes on the fire.

Romance and mystery over it all.
Mystery always and ever,
Old as the eldest of Egypt's gods,—
Will the light come ever, never?

The Death Pool at La Brea

NO song birds hover about its edge,
Where sad winds sigh through the stiff, brown sedge;
No fleet wings brush with a wild bird's grace
The sullen tide of the Death Pool's face.

But ever it lies there still and cold,
Wickedly waiting, and old—so old;
Chilling the warmth of the genial sky
Like a Gorgon's face with its lidless eye,
The haunt of horror, a place of fear,
Through many a dumb, unnumbered year.

Up from the cold, dark chambers of death
Oozes its pestilent, bubbling breath;
Wrapped in the folds of its stiffened slime,
The bones of monarchs of ancient time—
Of huge, strange creatures of monstrous girth,
Lords of the primitive manless earth!

What secrets locked in that deep, dark grave,
What wonders hid 'neath the thick, black wave,
What dreadful shapes here have mirrored been
That never by human eye were seen!
When, under the old, old primal law
Of bloody muzzle and crimson claw,
The saber-tooth and the great cave-bear
Tore the trumpeting mastodon there;
While green-eyed dragons with leathern wings
Screamed o'er the strife of the jungle kings.

"Mangos de Manila"

"MANGOS de Manila"—
Hark to the mellow call,
"Mangos de Manila,"
Most luscious fruit of all.

"Mangos de Ma-nee-la"—
I stop him in the shade,
The Aztec, brown "frutero,"
And soon the sale is made.

"Son muy dulces, jefe,"
Is what he says to me,
"They're very sweet and juicy"—
The truth we soon shall see.

No mango forks are handy,
So peel them with your knife;
Say, stranger, did you ever
Eat better in your life?

The slippery fruit a-dropping
Great gouts of liquid gold:—
Just shut your eyes and swallow
And dream of days of old.

You hear the fountain tinkling,
A strange speech meets your ear,
The mango on your palate
Brings it all to you here.

It somehow draws you nearer
To India and the East

To Afric's tawny jungles
A thousand years at least.

"Mangos de Manila,"
A golden link to all
Of good Haroun-al-Raschid,
And muezzin's plaintive call,—

Arabian Nights and hasheesh,
With all our childhood knew
Of tales from land of faery
Broidered with gold and blue.

The harem's marble lattice,
Where musky south winds sigh
In "Mangos de Ma-nee-la"
Our swart frutero's cry.

Grief

AT a sunken lake's edge in the dreary night,
In a cypress silvered by the dead moon's light,
With rain-chilled nest and heart all desolate,
A widowed dove sits, mourning for her mate.

Kismet

'TWAS Kismet that ever I knew him;
'Twas Kismet that first drew me to him,
And for Kismet I loved him and slew him!

A Norther in Veracruz

WHEN the bluff and boisterous North Wind
Comes to woo the Sunny South
And a thousand roaring thunders
Are the kisses of his mouth;

When the sea birds seek a shelter
In some battered, splintered rock
And the walls of Juan Ullua
Tremble 'neath the surge's shock;

When the sails are blown to tatters,
Timbers start in every joint,
And the grey, bare-headed helmsman
"Holds her down another point,"

When the booming winds of heaven
Heap the surges o'er the deck
And the tiger leaping lightnings
Show the crushed and battered wreck;

When the shark-toothed reefs are grinning,
Waiting for their wounded prey;
As the seething, rushing waters
Urge the doomed ships down the bay;

When the demons of the ocean
Grip the goblins of the sky
And the devils to the landward
Fling their sandy arms on high;

When the rain like Mauser bullets
Hisses from the inky gloom;

And the "Pale Horse," Death bestridden,
  Gallops where the breakers boom;

When the sailors pray the Virgin,
  And the captain makes a vow,
And the fisher boats are scudding
  Anywhere and anyhow;

When amid the Gulf's wild fury
  And the screams from whitened lips
Coral reefs are ground to powder
  As they grind the groaning ships;

When the devil takes the tiller
  And his demons rule the deck
And the ooze from bloody corpses
  Streams and reddens o'er the wreck;

When each skipper out to seaward
  Trembles in his sodden shoes
Then you know we have a "Norther,"
  Southward here in Veracruz.

At the Ruins of Mitla

A MOURNFUL hollow in the old grey hills
Where never a bird its glad sweet music trills,
We shiver in the sunlight for a spell
Still broods o'er Mictlan,—gloomy mouth of Hell!

The narrow streamlet as of old runs on,
But they who built these palaces are gone;
They came, they went nor left one word behind,
We search and dig but only questions find.

The air is chill with voices of the dead,
But not a word we catch of all they said;—
That slant-eyed, squat-hipped folk of ancient day,
Long since returned to primal dust and clay.

We bow our heads to pass the temple door
Where the plumed high-priest strode erect before;
Each monolith still fitted to its groove
Which time nor earthquake one hair's breadth could move.

A pigmy race of men of mighty dreams
Reared these quaint carven walls, these ponderous beams,
Wrought patiently in tireless feeble strength

Till the huge capstone lay in place at length,
Showing through all the centuries it should last
How here some nameless Indian Angelo passed.

* * *

Glad that we came, we gladly turn away
Back to the wholesome breath of living day;
The long whip cracks, the creaking coach appears
To bear us from these ghosts of weird, wan years.

In the Cathedral Towers at Dawn

IN the cathedral towers I stand at dawn,
The slumber breaking bells have but begun
Their silver clashing and the dallying day
Comes slowly traveling upward from the sea.

Beneath me all the streets are half astir
With pious life,—servants and served alike,
Close hooded from the sharp insidious air
Bend churchward, heavenward, by a weary way,
Thorn set, tear wet, by sin and sorrow urged.
Below there toil-worn mothers faint and wan

Suckling at withered breasts their puny babes;
And street-worn men with poverty their bride,
Wake foodless in this city of the sun:
While others, sons of Fortune's fickle smile,
Who never toiled nor hungered, calmly sleep
And over all the mercy of our God!

Merrily ring the great Cathedral bells
Over the life-sick multitude below;
No voice for them calling from airy steeps
Of heights celestial, bidding them return
Out, onward, forward, upward to their God.

O'erhead the beauty of the morning stars
Down there the endless misery of man!
The fresh winds blow from out the great salt sea
And down from scarped and thunder riven peaks
But not for them, nor any voice of morn
Comes caroling from dewy meadow grass.

Alone and poor, poor and alone they live
Hopeless and songless in this bright sunland,
And die at last sad-faced and hollow-eyed
Mantled in Misery. Brethren, pray for such.

Titian's "Entombment of Christ"

(Tzintzuntzan)

AN old grey church all full of other years.
With knee-worn pavement stained by bitter tears;
Sunlight without but graveyard gloom within
The house where God forgives His children's sin.

A charnel odor loads the still, cold air
As if the spirits of the dead were there,
Until awe-stricken by the half-lit gloom
We shudder as though shut within a tomb!

But suddenly a window opens wide,
And afternoon pours in its golden tide
Showing us there upon the old stone wall
Of Titian's genius masterpiece of all.

A pallid Christ all mutely tombward borne
By faithful hearts so dumb and sorrow-torn,
A few disciples there, by fear late driven—
A Magdalene and Mother—anguish riven.

O! pallid Christ, bruised by the Cross and Thorn,
O! faithful hearts, no longer may ye mourn,
The dear Lord sleepeth, soon to wake again
And set His kingdom in the hearts of men!

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